

REMARKS

This Response is submitted in reply to the Office Action dated August 29, 2006 and in accordance with the telephone interview conducted on November 20, 2006. Claims 1, 24, 34 and 35 have been amended. No new matter has been added by these amendments. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

A petition for a one-month extension of time to respond to the Office Action, a Terminal Disclaimer and a Request for Continued Examination (RCE) are submitted herewith.

Please charge deposit account number 02-1818 to cover the cost of the Terminal Disclaimer, the one-month extension of time, the RCE and any other fees due in connection with the filing of this Response.

The Office Action rejected Claims 1 to 39 on the ground of non-statutory double patenting over claims 1 to 55 of U.S. Patent No. 6,632,140 (Berman, et al.). Applicants have submitted a Terminal Disclaimer in compliance with 37 C.F.R. 1.321(c) to overcome this rejection. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection.

The Office Action rejected Claims 24 to 28, 34, 37 and 38 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Mayeroff (U.S. Patent No. 6,186,894). Applicants respectfully disagree with and traverse this rejection for at least the reasons discussed below.

Independent Claim 24 is directed to a casino gaming apparatus that includes, amongst other elements, a processor programmed to (i) identify a predetermined symbol combination occurring on the display grid during the standard mode of operation to activate the bonus mode of operation, and during the bonus mode of operation, in the same play of the game, the processor programmed to (ii) randomly present symbols via a physical reel configuration which includes one or more reels having corresponding reel strips, (iii) deactivate any of the reels presenting a discontinue symbol, (iv) determine which active reels, if any, have been deactivated, and (v) repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbol until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated.

On Pages 4 and 5, the Office Action stated that:

Mayeroff discloses a casino gaming apparatus hosting a gaming activity having at least a standard mode of operation and a bonus mode of operation, the casino gaming apparatus comprising: a video screen...; a display grid...; a user interface...; and a processor configured to (i) identify a predetermined symbol combination occurring on the display grid during the standard mode of operation to activate the bonus mode operation, in the same play of the game...; (ii) to randomly present symbols via a physical reel configuration which includes one or more reels having corresponding reel strips...; (iii) deactivate any of the reels presenting a discontinue symbol...; and (iv) repeating the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated (see col. 4: ln 29-col. 6: ln 54).

Contrary to the Office Action, Mayeroff does not anticipate a processor that, in the same play of the game during the bonus mode of operation, is programmed to (ii) randomly present symbols via a physical reel configuration which includes one or more reels having corresponding reel strips, (iii) deactivate any of the reels presenting a discontinue symbol, (iv) determine which active reels, if any, have been deactivated, and (v) repeat the random presentation of symbols, the deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbol and the determination of which reels have been deactivated until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated. Mayeroff discloses a slot machine having a first set of reels for a primary game and a second set of reels for a bonus game. The Mayeroff slot machine provides a player multiple plays or chances of the bonus game. In each play of the Mayeroff bonus game, the second set of reels is rotated and stopped one time to determine any bonus win provided to the player. The bonus game ends when the number of chances for the bonus game expires.

In Mayeroff, each of the secondary event reels are activated and stopped for each chance provided to the player in the bonus event. None of the secondary event reels in Mayeroff are deactivated after presenting a discontinue symbol. Furthermore, Mayeroff does not anticipate a processor programmed to determine which reels have

been deactivated because, for each chance in Mayeroff's bonus event, all of the secondary event reels are spun and stopped. Mayeroff does not anticipate deactivating reels after the reel(s) present the discontinue symbol. On the other hand, independent Claim 24 includes a processor that, during the bonus mode of operation, is programmed to deactivate the reels presenting a discontinue symbol and determine which reels, if any, have been deactivated. Additionally, independent Claim 24 includes the processor programmed to repeat the random presentation of symbols, the deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols and the determination of which reels have been deactivated in the same play of the game until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated. Accordingly, Mayeroff does not anticipate repeating the random presentation, the deactivation and the determination until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated. For at least these reasons, Mayeroff does not anticipate a casino gaming apparatus as in independent Claim 24. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that independent Claim 24 patentably distinguishes over Mayeroff and is in condition for allowance.

Claims 25 to 28 depend directly or indirectly from Claim 24 and are in condition for allowance for the reasons given above with respect to Claim 24, and because of the additional features recited in these claims.

Independent Claim 34 is patently distinguished over Mayeroff for similar reasons as given above with respect to independent Claim 24. Claims 37 and 38 depend directly or indirectly from one of independent Claims 24 and 34. Claims 37 and 38 are in condition for allowance for the reasons given above with respect to Claims 24 and 34, and because of the additional features recited in these claims. For example, Mayeroff does not anticipate the deactivated reels being prevented from presenting another symbol in the same play of the game as in dependent Claim 37. According to the Office Action, the stopped reels of Mayeroff can be respun to present another symbol in the same play of the game. As discussed above, the stopped reels of Mayeroff are able to present another symbol whereas the deactivated reels of Claim 37 is prevented from presenting another symbol.

The Office Action rejected Claims 1, 35, 36 and 39 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Baerlocher et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,319,124).

Independent Claim 1 is directed to a method for facilitating a play of a slot game that includes, amongst other elements, (b) presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments, (c) deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol, (d) determining which active reel segments, if any, have been deactivated, and (e) repeating (b) to (d) in the same play of the slot game until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated.

In contrast to independent Claim 1, Baerlocher, et al. discloses a gaming device that involves signifying reel symbols for a variety of purposes, such as highlighting winning symbols or losing symbols. The gaming device signifies the reel symbols by applying enhancements to certain reel symbols or their backgrounds, such as coloration. The enhancement of a losing symbol in Baerlocher, et al. is not the same as deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol as in independent Claim 1. Moreover, Baerlocher, et al. do not anticipate determining which active reel segments have been deactivated and repeating (b) to (d) as described above until a predetermined number of active reel segments have been deactivated. Accordingly, Baerlocher, et al. do not anticipate the method of independent Claim 1. For at least these reasons, independent Claim 1 is patently distinguished from Baerlocher, et al. and in condition for allowance.

Independent Claim 35 is patently distinguished over Baerlocher, et al. for similar reasons as given above with respect to independent Claim 1. Claim 36 depends directly from independent Claim 35 and is in condition for allowance for the reasons given above with respect to Claim 35, and because of the additional features recited in this claim.

The Office Action rejected Claims 4 to 23 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Baerlocher, et al. and further in view of Telnaes (U.S. Patent No. 4,448,419).

The Office Action suggested that Baerlocher, et al. does not teach the basic operation of virtual reel stops, and relied on Telnaes to teach the basic operation of a virtual reel as it is associated with a display grid or a physical reel device. Regardless of whether Telnaes teaches such basic operation, Telnaes does not teach or suggest a method for facilitating a play of a slot game that includes, amongst other elements, (b)

presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments, (c) deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol, (d) determining which active reel segments, if any, have been deactivated, and (e) repeating (b) to (d) in the same play of the slot game until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated as in independent Claim 1 and dependent Claims 4 to 23.

Telnaes teaches control circuitry that randomly determines a reel stop position for each reel. The control circuitry stops each reel at the determined position for each play of the game based on random number. In Telnaes, after each reel is stopped, payout logic determines and indicates a payout based on the positions of the stopped reels. Thus, in one play of the Telnaes game, Telnaes discloses rotating the reels, stopping the reels at the randomly determined position and determining and indicating a payout based on the positions of the stopped reels. However, the stopped reels of the Telnaes game do not render obvious a method that includes, amongst other elements, the deactivation of the reel associated with the discontinue symbol and the determination of which active reels, if any, have been deactivated in the same play of the slot game, as in independent Claim 1.

Moreover, unlike independent Claim 1, the reels of Telnaes are not associated with a discontinue symbol. Control circuitry stops the Telnaes reels at randomly determined positions as described above. The Telnaes reels are not deactivated based on an association with a discontinue symbol. On the other hand, independent Claim 1 includes deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol. Stopping the reels at randomly determined positions in Telnaes differs from deactivating reels as in independent Claim 1 because the Telnaes reels are stopped based on a random number determined by the control circuitry. The reels are not deactivated in association with a discontinue symbol. Moreover, Telnaes does not teach or suggest determining which active reel segments have been deactivated. Consequently, the Telnaes game does not anticipate deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol and determining which active reel segments, if any, have been deactivated, as recited in independent Claim 1.

Furthermore, the Telnaes game does not anticipate repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments, deactivating the active reel segments that

are associated with a discontinue symbol, and determining which reels, if any, have been deactivated until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated. In Telnaes, the reels are rotated and stopped until each reel reaches a randomly determined position. Each play of the Telnaes game ends after one spin of the reels, wherein the control circuitry stops the reels at the randomly determined position and the payout is determined based on the randomly determined positions of the reels. On the other hand, independent Claim 1 includes, amongst other elements, repeating the random presentation of symbols, the deactivation of the reel associated with the discontinue symbol and the determination of which active reels, if any, have been deactivated in the same play of the slot game until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated. For at least these reasons, the proposed combination of Telnaes and Baerlocher, et al. does not render obvious a method for facilitating a play of a slot game as in independent Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that independent Claim 1 patentably distinguishes over the proposed combination of Baerlocher, et al. and Telnaes and is in condition for allowance.

Claims 4 to 23 depend directly or indirectly from Claim 1 and are in condition for allowance for the reasons given with respect to Claim 1, and because of the additional features recited in these claims.

The Office Action rejected Claims 2 and 3 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Baerlocher, et al. in view of Inoue. Applicants respectfully disagree with and traverse this rejection for at least the reasons discussed below.

As discussed above, Baerlocher, et al. does not anticipate the method in independent Claim 1. The Office Action stated that Baerlocher, et al. are silent to a secondary reel set and relied on Inoue to teach such secondary reel set. The proposed combination of Baerlocher, et al. and Inoue does not render obvious the method of independent Claim 1. Inoue teaches a gaming machine having a first set of reels for a primary game and a second set of reels for a bonus game. Inoue teaches that after a bonus game is started, the second set of reels (6a, 6b and 6c) are rotated simultaneously. Stop buttons (9a, 9b and 9c) are depressed as desired by the player, to stop the second reel set, reel after reel. If the stop buttons (9a, 9b and 9c) are not depressed by the player, the reels (6a, 6b and 6c) are automatically stopped based on a

counter in the same manner as for a normal game. Therefore, for each play of the Inoue game, each of the reels (6a, 6b and 6c) are rotated and stopped one time. Inoue teaches that successive plays of the Inoue game are played in a similar fashion (col. 6, lines 52-55). The proposed combination of Inoue and Baerlocher, et al. does not render obvious deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol, and determining which active reel segments, if any, have been deactivated. On the other hand, independent Claim 1 includes a method for facilitating a play of a slot game that includes, amongst other elements, (b) presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments, (c) deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol, (d) determining which active reel segments, if any, have been deactivated and (e) repeating (b) to (d) in the same play of the slot game until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated as in independent Claim 1.

Moreover, Inoue teaches stopping the reels (6a, 6b and 6c) of the bonus game based on player input or automatically stopping the reels (6a, 6b and 6c) based on a counter. The reels (6a, 6b and 6c) of Inoue are not stopped based on a discontinue symbol presented by the reels as in independent Claim 1. Moreover, Inoue does not anticipate determining which active reels, if any, have been deactivated because for each play of Inoue's game, all of the reels (6a, 6b and 6c) are spun and stopped. On the other hand, independent Claim 1 includes a method for facilitating a play of a slot game that includes, amongst other elements, deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol and determining which, if any, active reel segments have been deactivated as in independent Claim 1.

The proposed combination of Baerlocher, et al. and Inoue does not render obvious a method for facilitating a play of a slot game that comprises, amongst other elements, repeating the random presentation of symbols, the deactivation of the reel associated with the discontinue symbol and the determination of which active reels, if any, have been deactivated in the same play of the slot game until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated as in independent Claim 1 and dependent Claims 2 and 3. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 2 and 3 patentably distinguish over the proposed combination of Baerlocher, et al. and

Inoue. Claims 2 and 3 are in condition for allowance for the reasons given with respect to independent Claim 1, and because of the additional features recited in these claims.

The Office Action rejected Claims 29 to 32 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Mayeroff in view of Marnell, II et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,332,219; hereafter "Marnell"). Applicants respectfully disagree with and traverse this rejection for at least the reasons discussed below.

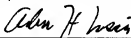
Marnell teaches an electronic poker game with a randomly generated bonus outcome. The bonus outcome is added to any winning outcome obtained by a player. Like Mayeroff, described above, Marnell does not determine which reels become deactivated because in Marnell's game, all of the reels are spun and stopped. However, Marnell does not remedy the deficiencies of Mayeroff discussed above with respect to independent Claim 24. The proposed combination of Mayeroff and Marnell does not teach, suggest or disclose a processor that, in the same play of the game during the bonus mode of operation, is programmed to: (ii) randomly present symbols via a physical reel configuration which includes one or more reels having corresponding reel strips, (iii) deactivate any of the reels presenting a discontinue symbol, (iv) determine which reels, if any, have been deactivated, and (v) repeat the random presentation of symbols, the deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbol and the determination of which reels have been deactivated until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated as in independent Claim 24 and dependent Claims 29 to 32. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 29 to 32 are patentably distinguished over the proposed combination of Mayeroff and Marnell. Claims 29 and 32 are in condition for allowance for the reasons given with respect to independent Claim 24, and because of the additional features recited in these claims.

The Office Action rejected Claim 33 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Mayeroff in view of Inoue. Applicants respectfully disagree with and traverse this rejection for at least the reasons discussed below.

The Office Action stated that Mayeroff is silent with regard to "a processor configuring to repeat to randomly present the symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols until all of the reels have been deactivated."

The Office Action relied on Inoue for this teaching. As discussed above, Inoue teaches stopping the reels (6a, 6b and 6c) of the bonus game based on player input or automatically stopping the reels (6a, 6b and 6c) based on a counter. The reels (6a, 6b and 6c) are not stopped in association with a discontinue symbol. The proposed combination of Mayeroff and Inoue does not teach, suggest or disclose a processor that, in the same play of the game during the bonus mode of operation, is programmed to: (i) randomly present symbols via a physical reel configuration which includes one or more reels having corresponding reel strips, (ii) deactivate any of the reels presenting a discontinue symbol, (iii) determine which active reels, if any, have been deactivated, and (iv) repeat the random presentation of symbols, the deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbol and the determination of which reels, if any, have been deactivated until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated as in independent Claim 24 and dependent Claim 33. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that dependent Claim 33 patentably distinguishes over the proposed combination of Mayeroff and Inoue. Claim 33 is in condition for allowance for the reasons given above with respect to independent Claim 24, and because of the additional features recited in this claim.

An earnest endeavor has been made to place this application in condition for formal allowance and in the absence of more pertinent art such action is courteously solicited. If the Examiner has any questions regarding this Response, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,
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